

ABSTRACT

The number of IP addresses required by a central office device,
which is connected to a network segment and a number of customer
5 internet devices to pass packets between the network segment and the
customer internet devices, is reduced to one by using an IP address and
a subnet mask that are associated with the network interface as a
virtual interface. The subnet mask allows packets to be routed to the
central office device, which then forwards the packets to the customer
10 internet devices.